



Newsletter No. 5

23 April 2013

A new Friend emailed **FSM**:

"I am so heartened that solid leadership is being taken by the elders in the scientific and medical professions. I thought I was the only one horrified by what is going on and [Stop the Anti Vaccination Network](#) was the only lobby group making a stand.

As you know so very well, many young mums wear a badge of honour having their children not vaccinated and use dodgy 'health care professionals' with pride. We need active science communicators, who teach the art of scientific thinking and discipline to the community and stand up against health scams."

We encourage our *Friends* to speak out and to spread the word about **FSM** - and to circulate our newsletters!

"No battle was ever won by spectators". If you have just two colleagues who share your interest in championing evidence-based medicine, why not invite them to join us as named supporters? It will make a difference. Sign on at <http://www.scienceinmedicine.org.au>.

FSM in the media

Scientists question status of alternative therapies: In December 2012, the South Australian branch of the Australian Science Communicators (ASCSA) hosted a panel session at the [Royal Institution of Australia](#) at one of their monthly meetings. Titled *Alternative Science: Winners and Losers*, it presented five speakers, including three of the five founders of **FSM**, Pharmacology lecturer Prof Ian Musgrave and journalist Tory Shepherd, who frequently covers alternative health matters.

In March, three articles were published in the [Sydney Morning Herald](#), starting with statistics about the misuse of the [Medicare 'Chronic Disease Management' Scheme](#) in which *"funding for chiropractic treatments for children aged between zero and four years old has increased by more than 300 per cent in the past five years"*. The [second article](#) detailed an anti-vaccination course [The Science of Immunology and Vaccination](#), which was assessed by the Chiropractors' Association of Australia (CAA) for 8 Formal Learning Activities (FLA) hours and is run by a high profile overseas [anti-vaccination campaigner](#) and [author](#) known to promote *"a good argument to avoid [vaccinations]"*. Since 2010, there have been more than 10 speakers at chiropractic [conferences](#) who are associated with [anti-vaccination](#), including the immediate past president of the CAA.

The [third article](#) was about our CEO, Loretta Marron, and her concerns that alternative medicine courses in Universities gave them undue credibility.

Prof Rob Morrison appeared in *The Project* (Channel 10) and on 3AW (Victoria), where he challenged the pseudoscientific aspects of chiropractic while discussing the importance of supporting the scientific process. Prof Alastair MacLennan and Prof John Dwyer were also on [TodayTonight \(Channel 7\)](#) where they highlighted their great concern that chiropractors want to be the first point of care for children with virtually any disease or disability e.g. asthma, infections, bed wetting, cerebral palsy autism etc. These disorders are treated with their main treatment modality, a course of 'adjustments' of mythical 'subluxations'. Treatment of serious disease is delayed by this kind of intervention and Medicare costs soar. Courses are being run by chiropractors to qualify other chiropractors with a Diploma as 'Paediatric Chiropractors'. *See below*. In seeking to enlarge their practices they also target healthy babies to 'adjust' them. This is a growing business and should be of concern to all, and **FSM** is not the only body to register this concern. One large group of 'moderate' chiropractors, [Chiropractic & Osteopathic College of Australia, \(COCA\)](#), have recently issued a press release saying that they do not think chiropractors should treat children for non-musculoskeletal conditions. They are pro-vaccination and they do not believe that subluxations are anything more than an unsubstantiated theory and treatment should not be based on this historical theory. Well done COCA!

What's new since our last Newsletter?

Chiropractic courses targeting young families

FSM has investigated Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses assessed by the Chiropractors' Association of Australia (CAA) for practicing chiropractors, identifying over 40 courses that target babies, children and pregnant women.

The [Diplomate in Paediatric Chiropractic](#), for example, attracts 50 Formal Learning Activities (FLA) hours and encourages practitioners to claim they are 'Paediatric Chiropractors'.

Also considered to be CPD are [Applied Kinesiology \(manual muscle testing\)](#), [Sacro-Occipital Technique \(SOT\)](#), [Building a Family Wellness Practice](#) (for chiropractors dreaming of "*having a practice full of children...*"), courses claiming effective treatments for "*allergies, ADHD, Autism and neuro[biological] disorders*" and a range of courses graduating '[Chiropractic Neuroscientists](#)'.

Other courses include [NET Mind/Body](#), which has [been reviewed](#) by Scientia Prof Joseph Forgas, School of Psychology, UNSW, who considers the claims made as "*mumbo jumbo*" with "*no proven psychological credibility*"; a range of percussion instrument type courses, such as the 'activator', a device that has [been reviewed](#) by A/Prof Richard Appleyard (School of Advanced Medicine, Macquarie University), who concluded that these types of interventions have "no sound scientific bases" and are "at best, an expensive placebo"; the [Webster Technique](#) for pregnant women (which claims to rotate breech babies) and [perinatal courses](#) that recommend that new parents have their babies 'adjusted' immediately after birth (and [five times more](#) before they can walk) as "*preventative interventions*".

Chiropractic courses [in homeopathy](#) have also been identified, which attract up to 7 FLA hours.

When the anti-vaccination courses were brought to the attention of the Chiropractic Board of Australia (CBA), they responded that they "*were not aware that any approved CPD courses may not be consistent with the Board's expectations of the profession, outlined in the [Code of conduct](#).*" However, they had received a report in August 2011 from our CEO, alerting them to a conference where a high profile anti-vaccination campaigner was an invited speaker. The same speaker was also an exhibitor at a CAA assessed [2012 conference](#).

Noting this number of [courses](#) that claim to graduate 'Paediatric Chiropractors', and concerned about the "*Advance of Chiropractic as Primary Carers into the diagnosis and treatment of a wide spectrum of Adult, Paediatric, and Obstetrical and Gynaecological disorders*", **FSM** wrote to the Presidents of the RACP, RACGP, RANZCOG and the AMA.

FSM recommended that:

"either individually or as a group the Australian Colleges above and the Australian Medical Association call upon the Federal and State governments to:

- 1. stop Medicare- and government-funded health fund subsidies for chiropractic care and chiropractic initiated imaging;*
- 2. call upon Universities to stop teaching in their courses "scientific and medical theories" such as subluxations and homeopathy that lack an evidence base; .*
- 3. stop chiropractic primary care of children without a medical referral, and*
- 4. set up a centralised mandatory reporting centre for serious complication directly or indirectly following chiropractic care. This includes serious delay of effective conventional therapy in children and serious neurological and vascular injuries (e.g. those causing stroke) at all ages."*

We will let you know what their responses are.

Naturopath Continuing Professional Development courses

Naturopaths are attending CPD weekend courses [on spinal 'adjustments'](#) and are also targeting young families, making the same claims as chiropractors & osteopaths. According to their website, the 'Dorn Spinal Therapy', is a "*gentle alternative to chiropractic treatment, it corrects leg lengths, hips rotations, back, neck, jaw, shoulder joints, visual and digestive problems, addresses headaches, sciatica, infertility, PMS, ear aches, tinnitus, vertigo, asthma, high blood pressure*".

Balmain Hospital - homeopathic clinic

FSM wrote to the NSW Minister for Health asking that the twice-a-week services offered by the Balmain Hospital 'homeopathic clinic', established in 1990, be terminated because it is both "wasting our health dollars" and that "*it also provides Homeopathy with totally undeserved credibility*".

The Minister responded that the clinic is fully funded by a Trust Fund, which was left for its operation after the closing of the Sydney Homeopathic Hospital in 1989. The Minister stated that the management of Balmain Hospital will be interested in reviewing the outcome of the NHMRC's investigation, and she referred **FSM** to the Acting General Manager of the Balmain Hospital for further information.

When the 2012 Federal Budget [announced an investigation](#) into the Australian Government's 30% rebate on private health insurance for natural therapies, homeopathy was included in the [review](#), with an extra note as being "*informed by the finding of the NHMRC Homeopathy Working Committee*".

In 2011, a [leaked document](#) from the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) stated "*it is unethical for health practitioners to treat patients using homeopathy, for the reason that homeopathy — as a medicine or procedure — has been shown not to be efficacious.*"

Private health insurance (PHI)

FSM submitted a response for consideration for the review of the Australian Government rebate on private health insurance for natural therapies. [Updates on the review](#) can be found on the department's website. Chaired by our Chief Medical Officer (CMO), an

advisory committee will examine the NHMRC's findings on homeopathy and thirty other natural therapies. Members of the committee represent natural therapists and private health insurance, as well as clinical experts and consumers. The committee does not include a representative from the [Australian Homeopathic Association](#).

We hope the CMO, who is chairing the review, will be able to make a difference when his work is published next year – but we are not confident that the politicians will endorse it. He is up against a powerful, well-funded lobby group!

If you are concerned about the cost of your private health insurance, please write to the [CEO of your health fund](#) and ask for an "Opt Out" for CAM. You can download [this letter](#) if that helps. We value active supporters.

Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA)

A submission from **FSM** was sent to the TGA relating [Consultation: Changes to premarket assessment requirements for medical devices](#). **FSM** sent in a submission which raised concerns about the hundreds of 'low risk' medical devices on the ARTG, including electro-dermal screening devices, magnets, ear candles, light therapy, chiropractic diagnostic and treatment devices and live blood analysis diagnostics.

[Click here\(*\)](#) to read **FSM's** submission.

The TGA has already recalled and delisted [hundreds of medical devices](#) because they are either faulty, dangerous or because they do not work. **FSM** supports an overhaul of the TGA, which runs the register, to give it more power to tell consumers what works, what does not, and to stop faulty goods getting to market.

Friend, Dr Ken Harvey had a cameo appearance in the first episode (and first segment) in a new ABC consumer affairs show [Checkout \(Channel 2\)](#) in a spirited and funny dissection of complementary medicines and the failure of the TGA to regulate them. Congratulations, Dr Harvey and the ABC Chasers team.

Pathology

A draft of recommendations compiled by **FSM's** sub-committee on pathology, relating to a raft of nonsensical pathology tests, was sent for comment to [The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia](#) (RCPA). The sub-committee, which includes a number of distinguished and senior pathologists, is pleased to report that they are taking our work seriously and we are hopeful of getting their full endorsement with minor changes.

FSM is still waiting for responses from the National Association of Testing Authorities Australia and its [Medical Testing Accreditation Advisory Committee](#). After this process and endorsement by **FSM**, the recommendations will be made public and sent to the Commonwealth Department of Health and appropriate regulatory bodies.

Registered Nurses and the Institute for Science in Medicine (ISM)

Nursing textbooks are in the spotlight. According to the US-based Institute for Science in Medicine (ISM)'s Exec Director, Linda Rosa, the content of some textbooks used by US nurses is a serious problem "*so far, every book I've looked at includes CAM promotion with insignificant or no critical analysis, even the books that are critical thinking texts*". **FSM** has purchased a number of Australian nursing textbooks including [The Nurses' Handbook of Complementary Therapies](#) which appears to be a reference book in many of the nursing degrees.

FSM is consequently looking for appropriate *Friends* to review textbooks and courses and may be asking for your help.

Advertising Concerns

One of our *Friends* brought to our attention a shopping voucher that was advertising a ['blood clot retraction'](#) test. The voucher proclaimed that "*This is the blood test you REALLY need*". The claims for this test included diagnosing cancer, diseases of the pancreas, liver, kidney, heart, thyroid, parasitic infections, allergies and "*nutritional imbalances*".

The voucher had been distributed to nearly 150,000 letterboxes and was available online. The pathology laboratory conducting the tests has already been [taken to task](#) by the ACCC.

Since July 2010, in-vitro tests have come under the jurisdiction of the [Therapeutic Goods Administration \(TGA\)](#). While a complaint could have been submitted to the TGA's Complaints Resolution Panel, they take upwards of six months to process. **FSM** wrote to the managing director of the voucher company indicating the regulations breached and, to his credit, he immediately cancelled the advertising. Our letter was timely in that a print run had been scheduled on the day he received our letter and he was able to remove the advertisement so it was not included in that and future letter drops.

Australian Menopause Society

FSM wrote to the Australasian Menopause Society (AMS) about a new wave of advertising by a high profile Australian, promoting a plant-based treatment for menopausal symptoms that was not presenting all of the evidence about the product's efficacy and safety. This issue was raised at their meeting and they have made it a priority to produce a new AMS Information pamphlet specifically addressing evidence for and against all available CAM's for menopausal hot flushes. The pamphlet will be highlighted on the [AMS](#)

[website](#) with a shortened version available for media use and for their [newsletter 'Changes'](#). They anticipate that this will be this completed within the next 3 months.

Acknowledgments & Congratulations

Congratulations to Emeritus Prof Robert Goldney & Prof Roger Byard, who were recently awarded AO's.

A big thanks to *Friends* who have had articles published or were in the news or on current affairs programs recently. Please let **FSM** know if you have published any relevant articles or have been on radio or TV programs.

Recent contributions include:

Prof Timothy Caulfield	Don't legitimize the witch-doctors (National Post) Using and abusing evidence in science and health policy (Biomed Central)
Prof Clare Collins	Monday's medical myth: take a vitamin a day for better health (the Conversation)
Dr Rachael Dunlop	When ARTG and CAM spell SFA ('The Bitter Pill' -Australasian Science) Anti-vaccination network told to change its name or be shut down (the Conversation) CAM or sham? Let's get the facts straight on vitamins and supplements (the Conversation) Why Australia's alternative medicines regulations need fixing (Life Hacker)
Prof Edzard Ernst	Research into chiropractic seems in a dismal state (Edzard Ernst) Three fallacies for the price of one (Edzard Ernst) Is homeopathy value for money? (Edzard Ernst)
Dr Ken Harvey	Pharmacists should drop products that aren't backed by evidence (the Conversation) Private health insurers' natural therapies rebate in the spotlight (the Conversation)
Dr Sue Ieraci	What's the Evidence? ('The Bitter Pill' - Australasian Science)
Loretta Marron	Chiropractic mallets & other wacko widgets (I2P) Feasting on Fat (I2P) Testing times (I2P)
Prof Ian Musgrave	'Toxins' in vaccines: a potentially deadly misunderstanding (the Conversation) World Homoeopathy Awareness Week Has Passed (the Conversation)
Prof Rob Morrison	Cam or Scam (The Project)
Campbell Phillips	Science Advocacy and Social Media ('The Bitter Pill' -Australasian Science)
Prof Steven Salzberg	IOM Finds Childhood Vaccine Schedule Safe - As it Always Has Been (Forbes)
Dr Mick Vagg	Cap, gown and wand (The Bitter Pill' -Australasian Science) The Medicandus Guide to Handling Your New Year Hangover (the Conversation) Concerns about chiros are about quality and safety, not some phoney turf war: (the Conversation) A response is received from the Chiropractic Board of Australia (the Conversation)

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